

EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND  
REFORMER 211

falls asleep, I feel that she is thinking of it even as I am. And we remain like that, a certain feeling of delicacy preventing us from making any allusion to what we are both thinking of. Oh! the thought is terrible ! There are nights when I suddenly spring out of bed on both feet, and remain for a moment in a state of indescribable fright."<sup>1</sup>

And this, it will be observed, was the leading French novelist of the time, a man in the prime of life, whose name was already known all over the world, who had risen from poverty to affluence, and who, if attacked by some, was also envied by thousands!

A few days after telling his friends how he suffered at the thought of death, Zola gave a *diner Jin* at his Paris residence. There was great display; and Goncourt tells us that the *menu* included *Dotage au btt vert*, reindeers' tongues, mullet *it la Provengale*, and truffled guineafowl.<sup>2</sup> But Zola was still out of sorts. Success had no charms for him, he said, and, in his estimation, literature was a mere dog's trade. Less than a month afterwards, on April 6, the day when "Pot-Bouille" was published, and when the first orders seemed to indicate a large demand for the book, Goncourt met Zola again and found him as morose as ever. The truth would appear to be that he resented some of the

criticisms already  
levelled at his work. He kept on growling, and  
finally ex-  
claimed that it was not so necessary to have  
had actual  
experience of things as some folk imagined; and  
as for in-  
cessant reading, well, he had not the time for it.  
" Society ?"  
he added," why, what does a drawing-room  
reveal of life ?  
It shows one nothing at all! I have five and  
twenty men

<sup>1</sup> "Journal des Gonccrart," Vol. VI, p. 186 (March 6, 1882).

<sup>2</sup> A somewhat similar dinner is described in " L'CEuvre."